

Roots of Empathy (ROE) is an international, evidence-based, classroom programme that aims to foster the development of empathy and emotional literacy among primary school children, in order to reduce levels of aggression, bullying and violence, and promote pro-social behaviours.

The programme was first established in Canada in 1996 and is being implemented in various countries on three continents.

- Barnardos is the lead agency for the delivery of ROE in Ireland.
- Over the last 11 years, we have brought the programme to over **31,000 children** in primary schools throughout the country.



How it works

- A neighbourhood infant and parent visit the classroom 9 times over the school year.
- Each visit focuses on a different theme, where a trained Instructor coaches the pupils to observe the baby's development and to label his/her feelings.
- The trained Instructors also visit the classroom before each parent and infant visit to support preparation, and afterwards to facilitate reflection, critical thinking and problem solving in relation to the specific theme covered, with a total of 27 visits to each classroom throughout the school year.
- In this experiential learning, the baby is the “teacher” and a lever that the instructor uses to help children to identify and reflect on their own feelings and the feelings of others.

Outcomes for children in Irish schools

- Increased levels of empathy; children are more competent in understanding their own feelings and the feelings of others.
- Increased awareness of the negative impact of aggressive or bullying behaviour on themselves and other children.
- Increased knowledge among children of human development and infant safety.
- Increased sense of classroom belonging and peer acceptance.
- Children develop and display more pro-social behaviours such as caring, sharing, helping, inclusion and kindness etc.
- Safer and more caring classroom environments.

What children and teachers say...

"That everyone is different and you have to put yourself in other people's shoes to understand how they feel."

6th class pupil, Ennis

"The class is becoming more aware of their feelings and the feelings of others. The programme is a wonderful way of creating a caring environment in your classroom."

2nd class teacher, Dublin

"That you have to love and care for everyone. That love grows brains. It helps people."

2nd class pupil, Dublin

Children of today are adults of the future!
Perspective Taking and Anti-bullying
Social/Emotional Competence
Respect and Inclusion
Safe and Caring Schools
Temperament and Human Development
Pluralism and Democracy